

The adults of this primitive species have mandibles in place of a haustellum and are stated to feed on the pollen of oak *Quercus* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* flowers (Heath & Emmet, 1976. *The moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* 1). Despite searching for this moth on flowers of these trees in season (this is an earlyish date) for the past three or four years the only individuals I have come across were two the previous year on cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* flowers and foliage at a locality about two miles from this one.

Other members of the genus feed on the pollen of hawthorn *Crataegus* and buttercup *Ranunculus* but I could not locate any of these in flower near this locality at the time and there were no oaks or sycamores in flower at this early date. This raises the interesting question of what these adult moths were feeding on. The only obvious source of pollen nearby was willow *Salix* spp., and I searched these without success. Could the moths have been feeding on the dusty algal growth that was growing abundantly on the beech trunks at this height? This has a consistency similar to pollen and was perhaps being consumed.

I have evidence that this attraction to tree trunks was not an isolated event brought on, perhaps, by the weather conditions on the day (sunny and hot with intermittent heavy rain showers). Knowing that this was a species which Dennis O'keeffe was looking for I telephoned him that night. The following day (overcast) we visited the locality at the same time of day and observed the same behaviour. Unfortunately I did not think to examine the resting adults close enough to investigate if they were feeding on the algae, but will clearly do so if the opportunity arises again. It is unlikely that they were emerging from subterranean pupae and crawling up the trunks to expand their wings during my visits as all the individuals seen (30 or so) had fully expanded wings and were capable of flight if disturbed.— IAN SIMS, 2 The Delph, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire RG6 3AN.

A note on the apparent rarity of *Rhamphomyia (Holoclera) variabilis* (Fln.) (Dip.: Empididae) in Kent.

On page 404 of his monograph (Collin, 1961 *Empididae in British Flies* VI, 782 pp., Cambridge) J.E. Collin stated that "*R. variabilis* is a common and widely distributed species to be found from the south coast of England to Aberdeen, Elgin and the Isle of Lewis in Scotland. It has also been taken in Wales and Ireland...". It is therefore interesting to note that of over 2000 records for the family Empididae s.s. which have been personally amassed for the county, only six pertain to *Rhamphomyia variabilis*. These were all from a survey of the Mereworth Woods complex in Vice-county 16 undertaken for the Kent Wildlife Trust during 1994. The data are: 13.viii.1994 Mereworth Woods O.S. grid reference TQ 642546; 28.viii.1994 Mereworth Woods, TQ 663553 and TQ 655559; 28.viii.1994 Roadside Wood TQ 647552; 3.ix.1994 Mereworth Woods, TQ 638534 and Peckham Hurst, TQ 638535.

An examination of the records contained in the personal card index file of the late K.C. Side housed at Maidstone Museum revealed two others, one from Hurst Wood (also part of the Mereworth Woods complex) TQ 6255 on 1.ix. 1975 and the other from Bedgebury, TQ 7233 on 29.viii. 1973.

Mr A.A. Allen (*in litt.* 1 June 1998) referred to the very local nature of the fly in the Blackheath area of south-east London. He said that it was constantly met with on the flowers of *Solidago canadensis* L. in his former garden at Blackheath, a few occurred in his present address at Charlton but soon disappeared with the reduction of the plant and had seen only one other, at Blackheath some ten years later.

Collin's records dated from 26 July to 1 October and the above data confirm that *R. variabilis* is a late summer – early autumn species. This fact alone cannot for its apparent rarity as much collecting has been done within the similar Blean Woods complex north and east of Canterbury during the same period. Furthermore it is quite a conspicuous medium-sized empidid having a brownish body and yellowish legs. It may be yet another case of an insect being regarded as common on the basis of a restricted sample of sites.– LAURENCE CLEMONS, 14 St. John's Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4NE.

The Shetland Biological Records Centre

Shetland Biological Records Centre was established in 1998 to collate biological records in one of the most important wildlife areas in the British Isles. With the help of Shetland Entomological Group, we aim to create a comprehensive database of entomological records for Shetland. We are very keen to hear from anyone who may have made a trip to Shetland in the past, and who may have potentially interesting and valuable records which we are unaware of. We would also like to encourage anyone planning a visit to Shetland to lodge a copy of any wildlife records with us. Issues such as data ownership, confidentiality etc. will be respected as a priority, where appropriate, and all records will be acknowledged.

Finally we wish to contact two people who are believed to have collected information about Shetland's invertebrate populations: Jon Daws from Leicestershire and Neil Marks from Norfolk. If anyone can put us in touch with these two, or if they are readers, we would be delighted to hear from them.

If you can help, or if you would simply like more information about the project, please contact me.– ROGER RIDDINGTON, Shetland Biological Records Centre, 22-24 North Road, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0NQ.
(01595 694688; email: shetamenity.trust@zetnet.co.uk).

New aberration of Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* (L.) (Lep.: Hesperiiidae)

The Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* is represented over most of its British and Irish range by subspecies *E. t. tages* (L.) which is predominantly single-brooded and characterised by a dark grey-brown ground colour with paler transverse forewing bands. Though minor variation in ground colour and markings is common, and Irish subspecies *baynesi* Huggins and second brood specimens show regional and seasonal differences, major aberrations are rare and involve diminution or expansion of the pale transverse bands (Russwurm, 1978. *Aberrations of British Butterflies*, E.W. Classey; Emmet & Heath, 1990. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. Vol. 7 (1), Harley Books).